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RETAIL PRODUCE MANUAL

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PRODUCE DISPLAY WORK METHODS IN RETAIL STORES

MARKETING BULLETIN NO. 33
Agricultural Marketing Service and
Federal Extension Service
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

This is the seventh in a group of bulletins that the Department is issuing on handling produce in retail stores. The six earlier bulletins are listed on the last page of this publication. This bulletin should be inserted in a ring binder immediately following the bulletin on "Customer Service for Retail Produce Departments." Together the bulletins make up a "Retail Produce Manual."

The bulletins present step-by-step instructions that will help retail store managers and workers save time and money in produce handling and will enable them to offer consumers produce of better quality with less loss from waste and spoilage. The publications in this group will also be helpful to specialists of the Cooperative Extension Service and State Departments of Agriculture in their marketing work with retail stores. These bulletins summarize the results of recent research by the Agricultural Marketing Service looking toward improvement in handling of produce in retail stores. The material in this report is based on Marketing Research Report No. 551 "Improved Methods of Displaying and Handling Produce in Retail Food Stores."

The research is part of a broad program to improve efficiency in marketing farm products, reduce marketing costs, and bring fresher produce with less waste and spoilage to the consumer.

The retail store operator is the last link in the long chain of produce handlers and is the only person with whom the consumer has direct contact. Unless the retailer offers fresh produce in a satisfactory manner to the consumer, direct or indirect losses may reflect back through each handler to the growers.

July 1964

DISPLAY WORK METHODS

Good display work methods are important for an efficient retail produce department.

GOOD WORK METHODS

SAVE TIME

INCREASE SALES

PRESERVE QUALITY



ADOPT THESE GENERAL RULES FOR GOOD DISPLAY WORK

1. Plan the work ahead!

Don't fight fires! Decide what will be done next and right after that! and later! Plan on what will be used in the next 6 or 8 or 10 displays that will need refilling, instead of working each display when it is nearly empty.

2. Do as much work as possible in the backroom.

Remove lids

Preprice

Package

Trim or sort

Do these things in the backroom to prevent congestion on the floor.

Work is done better in a proper workplace.

3. Take a payload.

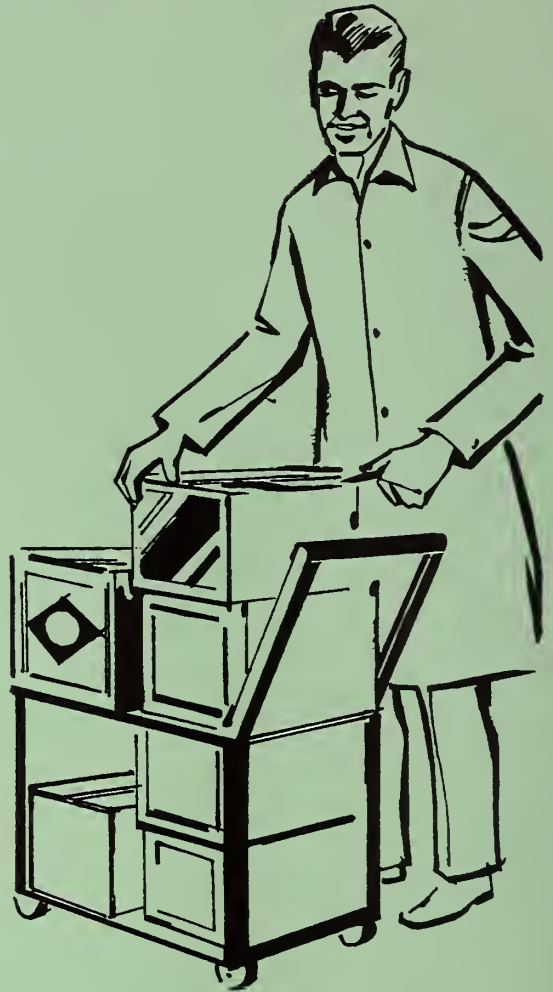
Make each trip count--take a full load. Plan long work cycles.

Traveling back and forth between displays and backroom with small loads is nonproductive and tiring.

4. Carry necessary tools and supplies.

Rig the display dolly with a shelf or rack to hold tools and materials so they will always be available.

Searching for tools and supplies wastes time -- it is the result of poor planning.



5. Park the cartload of merchandise close to the display--so the body does not twist each time merchandise is transferred to the case.

One of the most common faults in display is for the clerk to stand between the cart and the display passing the produce from hand to hand.

This is hard work.

It's slow--and wasteful.



6. Move the box of merchandise to be displayed close to the clerk.

The merchandise to be displayed should be close to the clerk, at a comfortable height, and as close to the display as possible--the box should be tipped toward the clerk if possible.

Shift containers on the load each time to get the one you are working into the best position. "Y" handle carts are highly effective.

7. Use two hands to obtain and move produce to the display--move them together.

Use both hands, moving together, to keep eye travel down. This also reduces body fatigue and insures better looking displays

When placing the product to achieve a pattern, use small amounts--preferably one or two items in each hand. Develop rhythm.

8. Use dump or loose displays--when possible.

Jumbled displays are easier to maintain and usually offer more product to the customer. Pyramiding takes a great deal of time and reduces the selling area.

Many produce items can be dumped if handled properly and if the container is not too big.

Keep control of the box--

Handle gently--

Use the arm to stop flow of product--

Spread it onto the counter--

Don't dump heavy boxes you can't control.

9. Display the whole container if possible.

Many items in season can be sold from the original container if the quality is very good.

Sometimes packaged items can be displayed in their shipping container. Some containers add to the appearance of the display--some do not. Be careful about the appearance of the display.

10. Keep merchandise on displays at reasonable heights.

It takes lots of labor to pile up merchandise.

Any level at which jumbled produce begins to roll off the displays is too high. Build displays to a reasonable level and refill when necessary.

11. Follow an orderly path at the counter.

If the cart is loaded so that the first item to be displayed is on top of the load, the next item second and so forth, you can move down the display counter in one trip, complete your work and save countless steps--consider the location on the counter in loading.

12. Use containers that nest and stack.

One of the more serious problems in display work is the handling of containers. Where reusable containers such as tubs are used, these should stack when full and nest when empty, to avoid having empty containers cluttering the aisles and to reduce storage requirements.



13. Get rid of trash and salvage as it develops.

The byproducts of display work are the empty containers, trash, and the merchandise which must be returned to the backroom.

Nest or stack empty boxes, consolidate trash, have a place to put old merchandise, and keep the floor and display area clean and orderly.

Get these jobs done quickly in order to have the cart empty for the next load.

ROTATE - IT'S NECESSARY

Steps to rotation:

Remove old--

Display new--

Rework and replace old.

Remember, every handling reduces value--
increases labor costs.

Don't use shopping carts.

Have a fixed time for rotation. Rotate on a regular basis. Different schedules are required for different items. Twice a day--twice a week, and so on.

Also check between scheduled rotation times--quality standards may make it necessary to rotate between schedules.

DO NOT MIX too many items that differ in ripeness, size, or quality--

Use separate displays with different prices if necessary. When rotating prepackaged items that require rebagging--break bags as they are removed, separate the bad items from the good to reduce further damage.



HOW TO REDUCE REHANDLING

1. Relate display space size to expected sales and condition of produce.
2. Avoid display fixtures with deep recesses.
3. Rotate when needed and only then.
4. Keep displays separate when different lots of a given produce vary in quality, size, or condition. Don't mix quality.
5. Keep quantities low early in the week.
6. Rotate displays when they hold a minimum quantity.
7. Use counter liners where possible.

CHECK YOUR DISPLAY COUNTER BASE!

The kind of display case available affects the profit and the work.

Good display-case bases reduce spoilage and require less labor.

Don't have "pockets" that keep produce from the customer.

A good display lets the customer select from the complete display, not just one small part of it.

Older displays can be "dummied" to save produce and give a better selection.

Don't use packaging supplies as a dummy base! Plywood or more permanent materials are cheap and they last longer.



A good display:

Gives the customer a large area to select from--

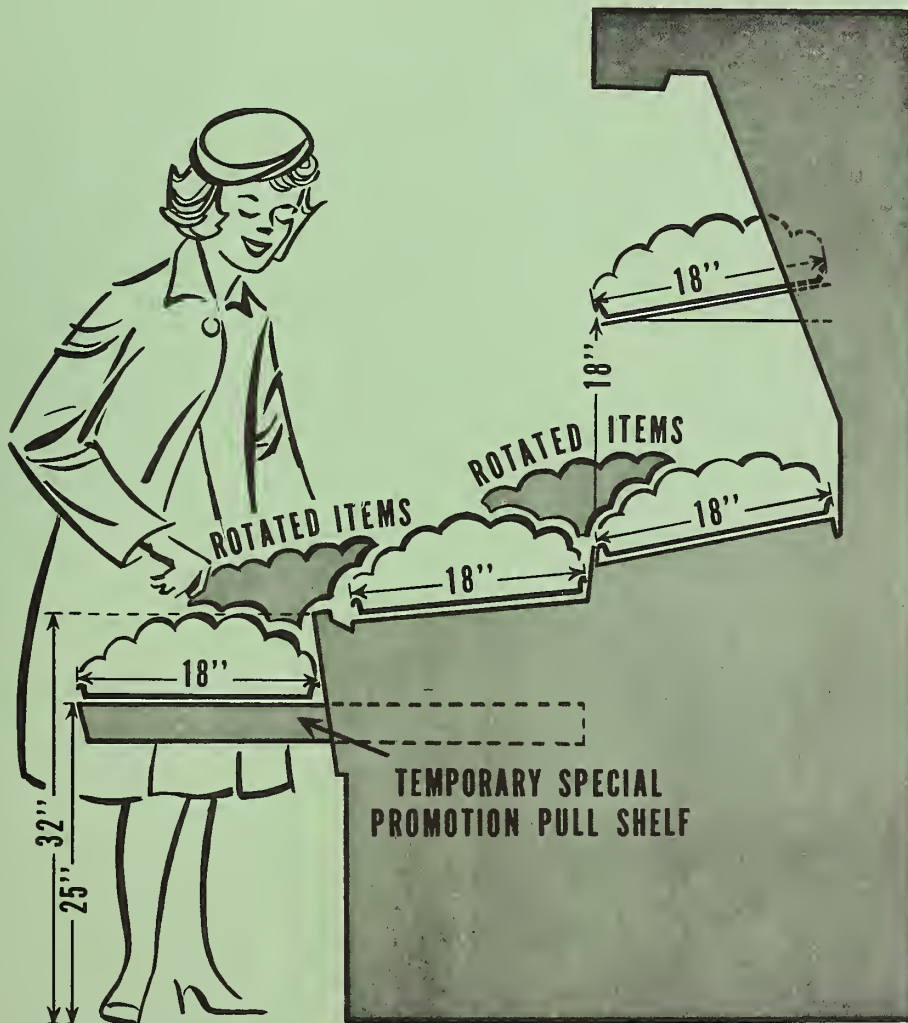
Makes a full display without being deep--

Makes a large "show" of the product--

Keeps product under refrigeration if case is refrigerated.

The display should make a mass display with a minimum of product and work. It should also be flexible. Standard displays can, by the use of "dummies" or extensions, achieve these purposes.

Don't pile too high.



TRAY DISPLAY

Tray display is the system of filling removable counter liners or trays in the backroom and inserting the whole tray into the display. It requires some special equipment but many stores have converted to tray display or partial tray display, using equipment on hand.

Every handling of a piece of produce reduces its value.

Tray display reduces these handlings.

USE OF TRAYS OR PANS AS COUNTER LINERS

They save handling and improve rotation.

Whether they are special equipment, bakery pans, plastic tubs, or other "homemade" devices, trays can save steps.



Plastic tubs are especially useful for small items or loose displays of slow movers.

THE STEPS OF TRAY DISPLAY

1. Trays or pans arranged to fit the display base.
2. Trays or pans filled in the backroom.
3. Full trays moved to display on wheeled racks.
4. Old trays removed.
5. New trays inserted.
6. Old merchandise rotated to the top of new displays.

Some general ideas:

Not every display need be rotated every time. Rotate when needed, on a regular schedule.

Also, displays are often loaded high for peak sales periods.

With tray display, displays may be shifted easily by moving pans.

"Checkerboard" displays may be used with different commodities on each pan (one commodity on the front pan; another on the rear pan).



Special work stations are needed for filling trays in the backroom. They should be convenient to storage and trash disposal.

ADVANTAGES OF TRAY DISPLAY

1. Reduced handling of the product. With the trays, individual items are handled fewer times. This helps to reduce damage and shrinkage and saves labor.

2. Better rotation. It is difficult to rotate produce in conventional displays. With the trays, produce is rotated nearly every time the display is filled, with the result that a much better quality of produce is on display at all times.

3. Less congestion on the selling floor. Clerks are able to fill displays more rapidly and thus spend less time on the selling floor, blocking the aisles.

4. Neater sales area. Boxes and other packing materials stay in the backroom. Only carriers with trays are moved to the selling floor.

5. Flexibility of display location. Changing the location or size of the display was one of the time-consuming jobs in conventional produce departments. With tray display, pans are readily shifted.

6. Better display planning. Clerks can plan on a definite number of trays to fill the display and arrange them quickly and easily.

7. Fixed workplaces save labor. When display preparation is done on the floor, clerks work at inefficient heights and have difficulty in using good work methods. Better production, with less effort, can be obtained by using a fixed workplace.



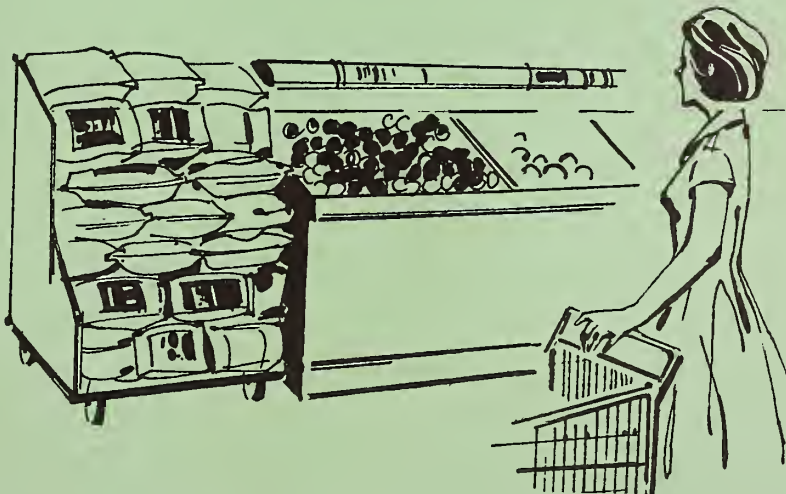
ROLLING OR MOBILE DISPLAYS

Rolling display bins for potatoes and other bag items are often used in produce departments. They save handling and make display arrangements more flexible.

Don't make them too big!

Some rules for design of rolling bins:

1. A size small enough so that they may be used exclusively for one item.
2. Nylon or hard-rubber casters capable of moving a full load.
3. Swivel casters on front or back only.
4. Adjustable dummies in the bin to allow flexibility, preferably attached to the bin so they cannot be removed (dummies permit maximum opportunity of selection with a minimum of product on display).
5. A shelf at the top of the bin which can be used for small items when displays are lower than the top of the bin.
6. The leading edges of the bins should be cut back enough to allow customers a full view of the produce.



OPENING BOXES

Opening and handling empty containers is an important part of produce handling.

Unless properly handled, empty containers can:

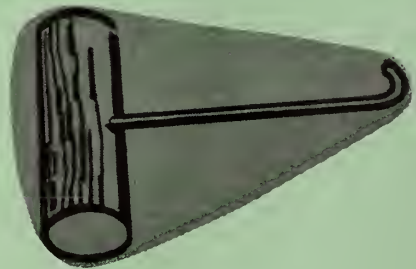
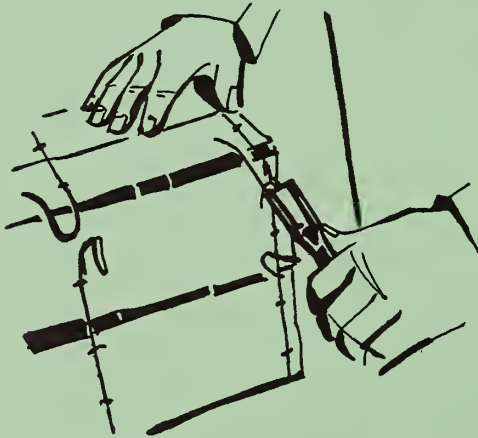
Cause accidents--

Create jams--

and waste space.

Empty containers should be broken down, nested, or stacked.
All nails should be hammered in or pulled.

Wirebound containers are made to be collapsed.
Simple tools are available to bend the wires.



When the box is empty, push in the ends and fold the box flat.

Most corrugated fiber containers can be opened by pulling the flaps.
When they are open the bottom flaps can be pulled and the carton collapsed.

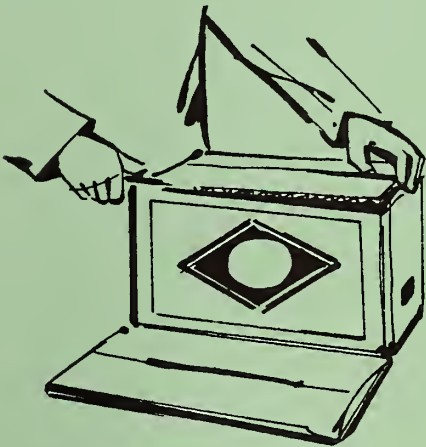
Citrus cartons and some heavier boxes are best opened with a case cutter.

Cut three sides of the top--fold back and remove contents.

Turn box upside down--pull up bottom slightly and cut three sides--then collapse box.

Return empties to backrooms.

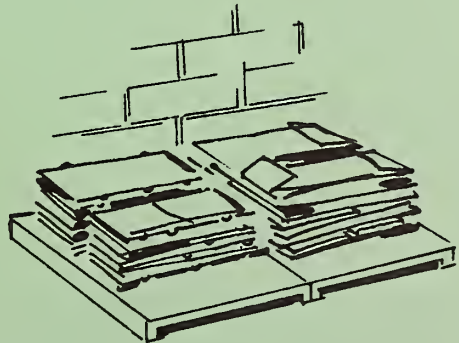
Stack neatly.



Tools such as hammers, case cutters, and wire pullers should be provided each worker--carry them on your person or on a tool rack on each display handtruck. Containers emptied on the display floor should be collapsed and stored on the handtruck.

Don't pile them in the aisle.

Unless empty crates are properly disposed of, as much space will be used for them as for new merchandise.



PRICE MARKING ON THE SALES FLOOR

Use a good stamp or stamp set.

Don't pick up, price, and display one item at a time unless you must carefully judge the value and adjust the price of each item. If the price is uniform, price a whole layer in the box before displaying or after transferring the merchandise to the counter.

This speeds up pricing and two hands can be used to transfer.

Some stores use codes, such as one mark, highest price--two marks, medium price--three marks, lowest price. With this method, merchandise can be marked down without difficulty.

Good stamps to use are: rotating band stamps or small multi-impression stick stamps sets. Prepriced adhesive labels can be used if they can be securely fastened to the package so customers cannot change them.



DISCOUNTING, MARKDOWNS, AND REDUCED FOR QUICK SALE

The most difficult decision to make is when to throw away or discount merchandise. Most produce managers do not do this soon enough.

Policies on price reductions vary among firms.

Most firms reduce prices to sell produce that is in oversupply. Choosing the right time to reduce prices will prevent loss.

Many firms mark down individual items that are no longer up to top quality standards. This should be done while the product still has value to the consumer. Don't mix your markdowns with the regular display.

A few firms sell produce that is not up to top quality standards on a special reduced-price display rack.

Whatever is done:

- Don't sell it unless it has good value.
- Reduce merchandise before it becomes unsalable.
- Prices should be about half the original price.

What items to reduce:

- When you have more than you can normally sell.
- An item that is ripe and still good.
- Odd lots of which there are only a few pieces left.

Some firms do not sell any items at a markdown. They prefer to throw away these items. Their gross profits are usually just as good as those who do discount. Don't let discounting ruin a quality image.

Don't use packaging as a way to sell overage merchandise. This hurts the sale of all packaged goods.

MISCELLANEOUS DISPLAY TASKS

SIGNS

Keep signs clean.

Keep them up to date.

Keep them orderly, and placed so that they clearly identify the product.

Use names that correctly identify the product.

Use correct prices.

Price and other signs should be kept separated into partitioned boxes near the selling floor.

Some materials should be kept on hand for making special signs.

SPECIAL MATERIALS

Promotional and special display materials should have a clean place for storage. Some supplies and adequate tools should be provided. Old, used, torn, or discolored materials should be thrown away.

Each produce manager should know the policy of his company regarding special displays and signs. Too much special material may be worse than none.

TAKEDOWN

Some stores remove merchandise from all or part of the displays at closing time. The job should be organized because, frequently, fewer clerks are available at this time.

1. Have adequate nesting tubs and handtrucks on hand for the job. Do not use old boxes or crates.
2. Police and check the display about one-half hour before closing -- Remove all "throwaway" merchandise.
3. Don't jump the gun on closing. Wait till closing time to remove merchandise and keep carts out of the aisle until then.
4. At closing, remove merchandise to tubs. Keep like items together--for instance, keep merchandise to be retrimmed in the same tubs and on the same truck. Separate merchandise that must be reworked from that which does not need it.
5. Stack the items so each can be seen at the top of the tub.
6. Store merchandise in coolers so it can easily be obtained in the morning. Spray or ice if necessary.
7. Clean display cases and floor.

PRODUCE MATERIALS HANDLING

Operating a produce department is primarily a job of moving and handling large quantities of goods. In a big store a produce clerk may easily handle or move 20 to 30 tons of merchandise and packaging material a week. Good work practices obviously can make this job easier.

1. Orderly, accessible storage saves handling.
2. Big loads reduce travel.
3. Preplanned trips to the display prevent unnecessary travel.
4. Use of skids, handtrucks, pallets, and other mobile equipment for storage saves rehandling.

Plan the work and reduce the tons that must be handled.

WORK SMARTER-NOT HARDER

HOW TO KEEP IN BUSINESS

Operating a produce department requires constant attention and considerable planning. Those who succeed in keeping a neat, well-stocked produce department usually have done a great deal of their work before peak sales periods.

Here are a few tips on how to stay in business during peak sales periods.

1. Know the peak sales periods. Plan to refill displays in advance of heavy sales periods.
2. Do all production work ahead of the sales peak. Tray display and prepackaging will help.
3. Prepare loads ahead.
4. Use evening help to work dry counters.



5. Use morning help to work wet counters.
6. Display bulky and less attractive items during slack sales periods.
7. Leave production lists--especially for use by evening employees.

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Copies of this publication may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 20402. The price is 25 cents each.

Copies of the first six chapters of this Retail Produce Manual may also be purchased. The prices are as follows:

Marketing Bulletin No. 2. Organization of the Work Area for Handling Produce in Retail Stores. 15 cents.

Marketing Bulletin No. 3. Ordering, Receiving, and Storage of Produce in Retail Stores. 5 cents.

Marketing Bulletin No. 4. Trimming Produce in Retail Stores. 25 cents.

Marketing Bulletin No. 11. Management and Scheduling of a Retail Produce Department. 20 cents.

Marketing Bulletin No. 14. Packaging and Price Marking Produce in Retail Stores. 25 cents.

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